

Research and Outcomes Department

Virginia Department of Correctional Education, VA

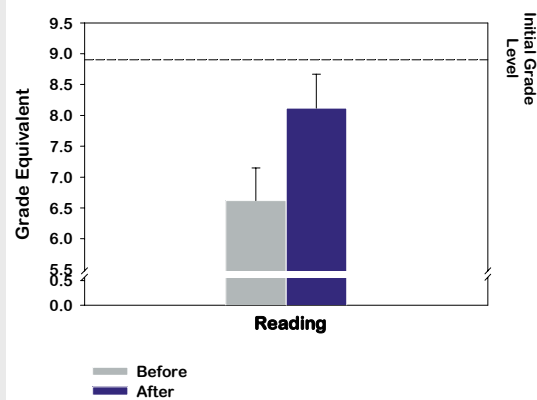
The Department of Correctional Education (DCE) is an independent school district with its own school board that operates in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice. DCE juvenile schools are accredited by the Virginia Department of Education. The DCE serves as Virginia's prison education system for youth and adult offenders. Among its facilities are 24 adult correctional centers, 13 correctional field units, 7 juvenile correctional centers and one youth reception center. There is a full-time staff of 784, 80% of whom are directly involved in the instructional process.

Approach and Methodology

Two facilities participated in this study during the 2003 – 2004 school year. School staff at one facility tested students before and after Fast ForWord participation with the subtests in the Broad Reading cluster of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement. School staff at the other facility used the STAR Reading assessment at regular intervals.

Educators were trained in current and established findings on the neuroscience of how phonemic awareness and the acoustic properties of speech impact rapid development of language and reading skills; methods for assessment of product candidates; the selection of appropriate measures for testing and evaluation; effective technology integration; approaches for using Progress Tracker reports to monitor student performance; and techniques for measuring the gains students have achieved after they have finished using the product. This helped ensure successful product implementation.

Improved Reading Skills by Students in Two Virginia Correctional Facilities



Grade equivalents from before and after participation on the Fast ForWord products show that, on average, 29 students made significant improvements in their reading grade level.

Fast ForWord participants in correctional facilities overcame challenges to accelerate their reading acquisition, improving an average of 18 months in reading ability during the eight months between assessments.

Participation

The Virginia Department of Correctional Education used both 48-minute and 90-minute protocols for the Fast ForWord Middle & High School and the Fast ForWord Language to Reading products. On average, the students used the Fast ForWord Middle & High School product for 21 days over nearly six months. On average, students completed 55% of the product content. Some students also used the Fast ForWord Language to Reading product.

Assessment Results

Data were available from 29 students. Overall, the students, whose average grade level was

8.9, were reading at the mid-sixth grade level before participation on the Fast ForWord products. After participating on the Fast ForWord products, students showed significant improvements in their reading skills, gaining an average of 1.5 years in the eight months between assessments.

In addition to increased reading ability, DCE teachers observed that students who participated in the Fast ForWord programs were more focused and exhibited improvements in behavior. Moreover, teachers reported that some students demonstrated a stronger interest in reading as a result of their participation in the program.

Discussion

Correctional facilities provide challenging educational environments. Students routinely miss activities and are in the facility for stays of varying lengths, resulting in many students being released or moving to another facility prior to post tests. Despite the challenges, students in two juvenile correctional facilities in the Department of Correctional Education used the Fast ForWord products during the 2003 – 2004 school year with good results. Overall, students in both facilities made significant improvements in their reading abilities after Fast ForWord participation.

On average, students had reading skills below their grade level before using the Fast ForWord products. Fast ForWord participation helped the students accelerate their reading acquisition; overall, students improved 1.5 years in eight months.

**To find out more about this study, and how
Fast ForWord products can benefit students in
your classroom or district, please
visit www.scilearn.com/resultsreports.**